

Minutes
Catawba County Board of Commissioners
Regular Session, Tuesday, January 17, 2006, 7:00 p.m.

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The Catawba County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, January 17, 2006, at 7:00 p.m. in the 1924 Courthouse, Robert E. Hibbitts Meeting Room, 30 North College Avenue, Newton, North Carolina.

Present were Chair Katherine W. Barnes, Vice-Chair Dan Hunsucker, Commissioners Glenn E. Barger, Lynn M. Lail and Barbara G. Beatty.

Also present were County Manager J. Thomas Lundy, Assistant County Manager Joellen Daley, Assistant County Manager Lee Worsley, County Attorney Robert Oren Eades, Attorney Debra Bechtel and County Clerk Barbara E. Morris.

1. Chair Katherine W. Barnes called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.
2. Commissioner Glenn E. Barger led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.
3. The Invocation was offered by Vice-Chair Dan Hunsucker.
4. Vice-Chair Dan Hunsucker made a motion to approve the minutes from the Regular and Closed Session Meeting of December 19, 2005. The motion carried unanimously.
5. Guests:
Chair Barnes recognized Chairman Charlie Wyant from the Catawba County School Board, and School Board Members Steve Hilton and Mark Sigmon and Dr. Barry Redmond, new superintendent of the Newton-Conover Schools.
6. Comments for Items not on the Agenda. None.
7. Presentations:
A. Chair Barnes welcomed Bob Shaffer from Future Forward, Kathy Pittman from Continental Tevis and Phil Walker, Area Vice President for BB&T for their presentation regarding the North Carolina Center for Engineering Technologies. Bob Shaffer thanked the Commissioners for the opportunity to present a request for financial support for this project. Future Forward Economic Alliance has spearheaded the effort to establish a center for engineering technology. This request was for Catawba County's financial support to purchase a facility from Corning Cable located in Hickory. The facility will provide a home for the North Carolina Center for Engineering Technologies in order to provide workforce development and specialized technical training. The purchase of the facility is a cooperative financial venture between public and private sectors. Funding commitments already obtained total \$1.3 million which does not include in-kind gifts and the \$1 million grant for equipment and programming announced at last month's press conference. The center will need approximately \$600,000 to move forward from public and private sources in addition to the funds already committed. Future Forward plans to transfer the facility to the University of North Carolina System in mid-2006 when it becomes an official center affiliate of the University and the operating budget for the facility will become a line item within the university budget beginning next fiscal year. Phil Walker identified multiple partners who had already committed funds for this project and they included BB&T, Wachovia, SunTrust, Bank of Granite, Caldwell County and Duke Power.

Some years ago, at the urging of Commissioner Lail, the Board of Commissioners set aside funds for future economic growth. These funds have been used for such items as the annual golf tournament and the expansion of the Hickory Metro Convention Center. The requested \$200,000 County commitment to this project would be funded from the same account, which will exhaust this account.

Commissioner Glenn Barger made a motion to authorize the chair to sign the agreement between Catawba County and Future Forward Economic Alliance and approve a budget revision of \$200,000 towards the purchase of the property.

Appropriation

Increase: Transfer to General Fund 225-170020-995110 \$200,000
Fund Balance Appropriated 225-170020-690100 \$200,000
Increase: Engineering Technology Center 110-420050-868188 \$200,000
Transfer from General Capital Reserve 110-420050-695225 \$200,000

B. Janie Sigmon, Associate Superintendent of Newton-Conover Schools and Jonell Ward, AIG Coordinator for Catawba County Schools, came forward to speak about the AVID Program (Advancement via Individual Determination). They had embarked on an endeavor to bring this program to the schools three years ago. This program challenges the middle-of-the-road students and it took two years of training for the staff participants to become certified trainers. This program targets students who are usually lost and are generally first generation college students and provides support that is necessary for these students to be successful. Maiden and Bandys High School have started the program, Newton-Conover High School and Newton-Conover Middle School currently have the program and there is hope to expand the program.

The premise of the program is that the students who are in the program, want to be there and the goal is to gain admission to a four year college and be successful in completing that program. AVID is based on 25 years of research supporting the program with a focus on this middle group of students and placing them in rigorous classes, from college prep to honors classes to advanced placement with support to be successful in this more difficult course of study. These students have the support of the AVID teacher to ensure they can navigate the avenues to college enrollment.

Since the implementation in 2002/03, the students GPA's have improved even with taking more difficult classes. Last year, Maiden was the first graduating class of AVID students and 94% of those students applied to college and 89% were accepted. All of the students in the AVID program in Maiden High School received a total of \$200,000 in scholarships.

Staffing requirements for the AVID program are 4 positions at Newton-Conover High School, 2 at the middle school, 3 at Bandys, 3 at Maiden and 1 at Bunker Hill.

Two AVID students and teacher Nicole Iams came forward to speak of the benefits of the AVID program and the success they have achieved based on the teachings and support of the program.

8. Appointments.

Chair Kitty Barnes recommended the appointment of Tammy Wilson to the Catawba County Council for the Arts to replace Mark Turner who moved to Illinois. Chair Barnes also recommended the reappointment of C. Randall Isenhower to the Alcohol Beverage Control Board for an 8th term and the reappointment of Robert Sanford to a second term on the Jury Commission. Vice-Chair Dan Hunsucker recommended the appointment of Phillip Pruett to the magistrate category of the Criminal Partnership Advisory Board. These recommendations came in the form of a motion. The motion carried unanimously.

9. Consent Agenda.

J. Thomas Lundy, County Manager, presented the following items on the consent agenda:

- a. Request for supplemental appropriation of \$35,000 from the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund to complete Riverbend Park. The County had received a \$125,000 state grant which the County had matched to build an educational building, a shelter, a dog park and additional parking and the project is \$35,000 short of completion due to rising building costs. After the transfer of the \$35,000, the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund will have a balance of just under \$100,000 for future park management.
- b/c. The next two consent items were requests to accept state grants for the Library – the first is a 21st Century Library Image Grant in the amount of \$18,906 – which does require a match of \$2,125 that will be funded by the Library. This will be utilized to help promote the library – part of which is to have a series of pictures taken of community leaders encouraging people to read and promoting the library as a resource. The second grant from the state is \$15,000, with no local match, to conduct a community strategic planning process with public input for the future of the library.
- d. Request for staff to be authorized to sell a 1999 Aljon 91K Compactor and a 1998 Caterpillar D5M XL Dozer from the landfill by declaring them surplus and selling them by electronic public auction.
- e. Request for a tax refund for American Medical International for 2003 and 2004 as a result of a decision by the North Carolina Tax Commission in the amount of \$21,570.49.
- f. Request for a change in the subcommittee date which was scheduled for Monday, January 30 to Friday, January 27, 2006 and also change the time of the subcommittee meeting from 8:30 a.m. to 8:00 a.m.

Chair Barnes asked if any commissioner would want any item broken out from the consent agenda and no items were asked to be broken out. Commissioner Barger made a motion to approve the consent agenda. The motion carried unanimously.

10. Departmental Reports.

A. Public Health.

Doug Urland, Public Health Director, presented a request for the Board of Commissioners to approve the increase in the Health Department revenue and expenditure lines in the total amount of \$61,330. These funds are provided by Duke Endowment for the establishment of eight (8) additional school nurse positions, to serve Newton Conover and Catawba County Schools.

Every day, 23,822 children attend public school in Catawba County. For children to succeed in school, they must be able to learn. Unfortunately, more and more children are identified with health issues that adversely affect their ability to excel in school. In recognition of the enormous health needs of school age children and the linkages between health and academic success, Catawba Valley Medical Center (CVMC) partnered with Catawba County Public Health to provide funding for 5 school nurse positions in FY 05-06. These 5 positions have been recruited and hired as of December 2005. Catawba County has a reputation of excellence in service delivery and ensuring services are tailored to the needs of the client. Understanding the importance of School Health services in disease prevention and health promotion, the Health Department, with the support of the Board of Commissioners, CVMC, and local school systems has taken every opportunity to add to and enhance the School Health Program; and currently supports 15 school nurse positions, 5 school health assistant positions, and operates a school-based/school-linked health center.

In November 2001, twenty prominent leaders in Catawba County, consisting of county officials and leaders in business, education and the community, were appointed by the Catawba County Board of Commissioners to begin a third round of the FORESIGHT strategic planning process. This group of leaders was charged to create a vision and develop a seven-year strategic plan capable of achieving sustained economic growth and new employment opportunities for the region. The FORESIGHT Final Report, released in July 2004, offers many creative and innovative strategies in the areas of Jobs and the Economy, Education, the Environment, and Leadership and Political Action.

The Education Section of the FORESIGHT Report stated, " In order to improve the academic performance of all children and engage their families in their education, children "at-risk of failure" need expanded services which may include health and dental care" and suggested the addition of four public health nurses to decrease the school nurse to student ratio to fewer than 1:2000 students. This FORESIGHT Report served as a catalyst to engage a new partnership with Catawba Valley Medical Center to meet the strategy of decreasing the school nurse to student ratio. Catawba Valley Medical Center then sought funds from Duke Endowment for the establishment of an additional 8 school nurses. These funds have been awarded to Catawba Valley Medical Center.

The Catawba County Health Department has a history of strong partnerships with all three School Districts. Since 2001, the School Health program has grown tremendously from five school nurses to fifteen school nurses at present. This growth has allowed more targeted services to middle and high schools in the last two years. However, even with this growth, there are still not enough school nurses to adequately address the health needs of the 23,822 students in Catawba County (ratio of 1:1588) and to meet the nationally recommended school nurse to student ratio of 1:750. Funding 8 additional nurses would reduce the average school nurse to student ratio to 1:1035.

Lowering the school nurse to student ratio will allow the school nurse to provide the appropriate health services and education for the children and teachers of each school such as is described in a *Coordinated School Health Program*. Coordinated School Health involves keeping students healthy over the long-term, reinforcing healthy behaviors, and emphasizing that good health and learning go hand in hand. The Coordinated School Health Program addresses eight different aspects of health and education, all involving the role of the school nurse. These components are: school environment, health education, school meals and nutrition, physical education, health services, counseling/psychological/mental health services, staff wellness, and parent/community partnerships.

These funds provided by Duke Endowment through Catawba Valley Medical Center, are for the establishment of eight (8) school nurse positions to serve Newton-Conover and Catawba County School districts. A breakdown of these funds is as follows:

Supplemental Appropriations:

Salary	\$44,850
FICA	\$3,431
Retirement	\$2,193
Group Health	\$6,325
Group Dental	\$305
Long Term Disability	\$117
Life Insurance	\$58
Short Term Disability	\$84
Office Supplies	\$58
Uniform	\$58
Travel	\$2,300
Education	\$345
Printing	\$115
Telephone	\$690
Small Tools	\$403
	\$61,330

Commissioner Beatty thanked Tony Rose and the Catawba Valley Medical Center for their support and work on this great accomplishment and commended the Public Health staff for their part in this nursing program. Commissioner Barger agreed with Commissioner Beatty in her compliments and said Tony Rose and his staff needed to be congratulated but they should also receive a letter of commendation for their efforts. Commissioner Beatty noted that the Foresight Committee had pointed out this need and she made a motion to approve the increase in the revenue and expenditure lines for a total of \$61,330. The motion carried unanimously. Chair Barnes asked Mr. Urland to express to all the staff their compliments for a job well done.

B. Schools:

1. Dr. Tim Markley, Superintendent of Catawba County Schools, came forward to present a request to proceed with bids for the new Catawba Elementary School. Four years ago, the Catawba County Board of Education identified the need for a new Catawba Elementary School to be financed through COPS funding. The Board of Education has also identified a classroom addition at Bunker Hill High School as a high priority. The Board of Education would like to have both projects funded. However, if only one can be financed, the priority is a new Catawba Elementary School.

\$9.2 million was projected as the cost four years ago, and is available from anticipated COPS financing for anew elementary school. The Board of Education has available an additional \$380,000 from unspent capital projects. The estimated cost of the new school, however, is \$11,470,585 without alternates, which means that an additional \$1.9 million could be needed to finance the project. The Board of Education is prepared to issue a request for bids with bids anticipated to be returned by the end of February.

J. Thomas Lundy, County Manager, addressed the funding options for this request. It was recommended the Board of Education to proceed with as much bid flexibility as is reasonable. In the interim, County staff will look at options to finance an anticipated need for additional funds, including the impact of higher COPS financing and making the additional funding a priority in the Fiscal Year 2007 budget request from the Board of Education. Mr. Lundy noted that with any financing option, it comes with implications. He noted that the County's debt ratio had always been low and the Board

committed several years ago, at the request of the school system, that as debt was retired, that debt would be plowed back into future school construction. So these costs could be added to that debt but that would take away from some other project in the future – or delay a project – a chain reaction. If that is not done, a revenue source must be found to retire the additional debt – taxes or eating into fund balance. The fund balance amount – 8% is what is required by the Local Government Commission – and this Board has set a requirement of 16% and are behind the urban counties. There will be discussions regarding the sale of St. Stephens Elementary and it's a revenue source but it needs to be remembered that that is money that is supposed to be paid back to the County that had been lent by the County.

Commissioner Barger commented that he did not know of any school that was in more dire need of updating than Bunker Hill High School and he hoped that the Board could find some way to help the problems there. He hoped that if the sale of St. Stephens went through that some of those funds could be directed to Bunker Hill.

Commissioner Beatty made a motion to authorize the Board of Education to proceed with the bids for Catawba Elementary School. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Dr. Markley proceeded with a presentation regarding the sale of St. Stephen Elementary School property. He asked that Attorney Crystal Davis address the proposed sale. Ms. Davis indicated that the Catawba County Board of Education had received an offer to purchase the former St. Stephens Elementary School property.

The Board of Education needed funds in Fiscal Year 2004 to complete a much-needed addition at St. Stephens High School. The Board of Education asked the Board of Commissioners to advance funds for the St. Stephens High School project and pledged to repay the County the amount of the construction from the proceeds of the sale of the old St. Stephens Elementary School property.

The total project costs for the St. Stephens High School were \$3,754,129. \$111,008 came from Board of Education funds, and \$110,000 were County funds for design purposes. The balance advanced, therefore, was \$3,533,121.

The purchase price which has been offered is \$3.677 million. After closing costs and realtor fees, this would leave \$3,529,920 to repay the County. Since this amount is \$3,201 short of the amount due the County, the Board of Education needs the approval of the Board of Commissioners to accept the bid.

The Board of Education has negotiated a contract on the offer to purchase, which provides that the buyer has ninety days to inspect the property and walk away without any forfeiture. After the ninetieth day, if the buyer walks away, they forfeit the earnest money deposit of \$183,850.

Once the Board of Education accepts this offer, state law requires the board to begin the upset bid process, so other bidders would have an opportunity to bid a higher amount.

Commissioner Barger made a motion to approval to accept the offer for the old St. Stephens Elementary School property in the amount of \$3.677 million and begin the upset bid process. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Dr. Doyle Brinson, Catawba County Schools, presented the Catawba County Schools Capital Construction Long Range Plan for 2005-2015. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction requested that each Local Education Agency complete the N.C. Public School Facility Needs Survey which reflects the capital construction needs for the next ten years. The 10 year projections identified by the survey serve as a planning guide to both the Board of County Commissioners and the Board of Education as they consider the construction needs for the Catawba County Schools. The combined 10-year capital construction needs identified by the survey exceeded \$105 million for 19 school sites and ranged from new school construction to renovations and additions to existing facilities. Chair Barnes noted that these figures addressed only brick and mortar needs and did not address technology needs.

3. Dr. Barry Redmond, Superintendent, Newton-Conover Schools, also presented the Newton-Conover Schools Capital Long Range Plan for 2005-2015. This plan will also be utilized as a planning guide to both the Board of County Commissioners and the Board of Education as they consider the constructions needs for the Newton-Conover Schools. The combined 10-year capital construction needs identified by the survey was \$32,363,805 for new school construction, renovations, additions and furniture equipment. Dr. Redmond pointed out that the age of the Newton-Conover buildings were more an issue than the growth of the school system but there was definite need for renovation and new construction.

11. Other Business.

Chair Barnes noted the Board had a request for a resolution in support of naming an I-40 Bridge for Gray Cockerham. Chair Barnes asked if any family members were present and none came forward. Chair Barnes said that Gray Cockerham was a graduate of St. Stephens High School and lived most of his life in Catawba County. He enlisted in the Marines and was killed in Iraq on October 21, 2005. His grandmother contacted the County regarding the opportunity to name a bridge in Gray's name. Chair Barnes said the item had not gone to subcommittee and further review with the Department of Transportation revealed that I-40 bridges are only named for deceased State Troopers. Chair Barnes said she believed it would be appropriate for the Board to issue a statement of commendation for Gray's family. Commissioner Beatty said she would like the Board to consider adding Iraq to the monument at the Courthouse and County Attorney Robert Eades said this would be possible. Commissioner Barger said he would support the commendation to honor Cpl. Cockerham for his service and to his family for their loss. Vice-Chair Hunsucker and Commissioner Lail agreed with these forms of recognition. The Board asked the staff to furnish them with the commendation and research the process to add to the monument. Commissioner Barger asked that research be conducted to identify any other Catawba County resident who had been killed in the Iraq conflict.

12. Attorneys' Report. None.

13. Manager's Report. None.

14. Adjournment. Commissioner Barbara Beatty made a motion to adjourn at 8:45 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

Katherine W. Barnes, Chair
Board of Commissioners

Barbara E. Morris, County Clerk